AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

Published by IPAC | Vol. 3, No. 3, June 12, 1968 | Single Issue Price 15¢

ELM HAVEN: NEW MANAGEMENT, OLD PATERNALISM

by Gil Fuchs

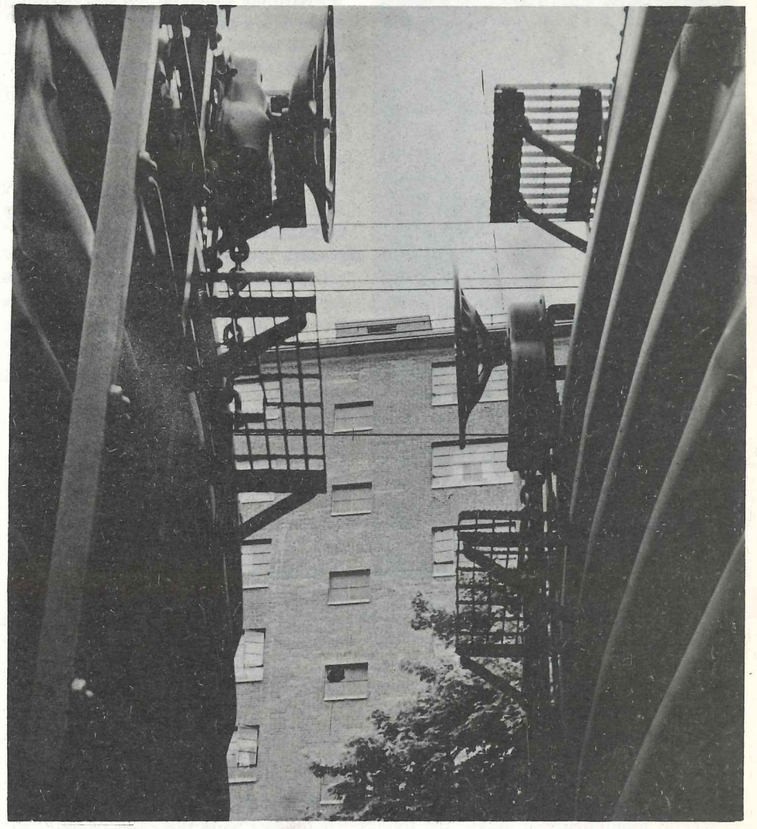
Two per cent of the city's people live in Elm Haven, the city's oldest and largest public housing project. Placed next to the Olin Mathieson plant and hidden from the city's view, Elm Haven has a lot of 'problems', according to Emmet Burke, head of the Housing Authority.

Tenants, social workeas, and Legal Assistance attorneys have charged that Burke has decided he can get rid of some of the 'problems' by getting rid of some of the families.

In the past, according to social workers, people have only been evicted for non-payment of rent. This year, tenants claim the Housing Authority has told them they were being evicted because they were 'public nuisances'. So far there has been one eviction and at least three eviction proceedings started on grounds of nuisance. In addition, two tenants say the Housing Authority has threatened them with eviction for being a 'nuisance'. Burke denies there is any change in policy and says the cases are being handled as usual.

Some tenants claim that the Housing Authority has compiled a 'black list' of people who are considered troublemakers and will refuse to accept their rent if it is late. They say the Housing Authority will then try to evict those people for non-payment of rent. This has been denied by Mrs. Geraldine Daniels, project manager at Elm Haven.

However, at least one tenant claims she tried to pay her rent seven days late and had it refused by the Housing Authority. Stephen Rose, attorney for the Newhallville branch of the Legal Assistance Association, is currently defending the case.



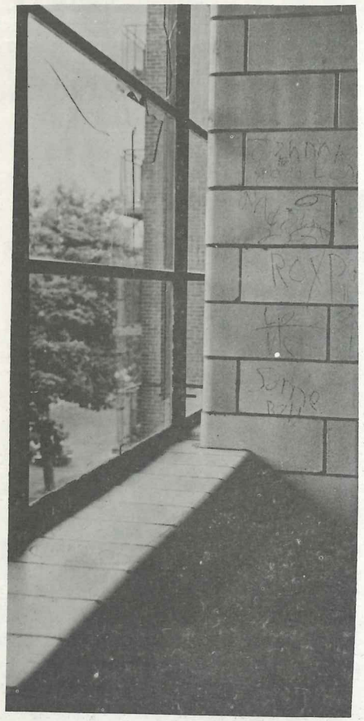
Elm Haven high rise. On the wrong side of the tracks.

Attorney Rose claims the Housing Suthority violates a directive of the Department of Housing and Urban Development by not granting tenants a formal hearing before eviction proceedings are started against them. Burke says that each tenant has 'his day in court' if he chooses to fight his eviction.

Rose points out this is not very effective because often tenants do not fight

Cont. Page 2

elm haven cont.



the eviction in court, and even if they did they must defend themselves against a charge of non-payment and not nuisance. It is easier to evict a tenant for non-payment than for nuisance.

Technically the Housing Authority can evict anyone on a non-payment charge who pays his rent later than the sixteenth of the month. Although it does in practice accept late rents, the Housing Authority can refuse to do so for any reason, and then evict the tenant for non-payment. Thus a person can formally be evicted for non-payment when the real reason is nuisance. Actually the Housing Authority can evict anyone for any reason simply by terminating the lease. However, in a simple termination of lease, the tenant can get extensions of up to six months whereas in a non-payment case, the tenant can be evicted in five days.
In the one case of eviction so far, the woman was four months behind on her rent. The State Welfare Department agreed to pay the back rent, and the Housing Authority attorney agreed to accept the rent, according to the social worker on the case.

When, however, the rent was offered, the Housing Authority's attorney refused to accept it, saying that it was no longer a simple case of late rent. According to the social worker, the project manager, Mrs. Daniels, said that too many complaints had been received about the woman and she was being evicted. The complaints were that she held loud parties and that her daughter had been seen throwing a bottle out of her apartment window. The social worker said she asked for some time to work on the case, but Mrs. Daniels refused to grant it.
Since the woman was on welfare, the state had to make sure she had a place to stay. Because no apartments were available, she was sent to a local hotel with her children. It is costing the state $15 a day for her room. This comes to $450 a month as opposed to the $88 a month rent the state paid while she was staying at Elm Haven.
If the woman had not been on welfare, she would have had nowhere to go, since evictions from Elm Haven are not relocated by the Relocation Agency.
According to tenants, evictions have been started or threatened for complaints ranging from letting a baby sitter have a noisy party to having a knife fight in the hall.
Burke says that when a Housing Authority receives too many complaints on an individual case, it is referred to the social services in the project. However, social workers claim that in at least three cases where eviction proceedings have been started, they have not been notified.

Mrs. Daniels says: 'The welfare units feel that no people should be moved out. The social worker has to be subjectively concerned with her client and not with the good of the whole community. There has to be a sort of parting of the ways.

But a social worker replies: 'Elm Haven is a dumping ground for families with problems. The city has created a problem here and must deal with it. The city doesn't have the right to evict people.'

Burke claims that only a small minority of people constitute the problem of Elm Haven. He says, 'Our goal is to provide decent, sanitary, safe housing for people in low income brackets who in turn must pay the rent. There are people here who are the most decent people I have ever met. However, there is a small minority who do not appreciate or understand the rules. They must adhere to social patterns that were set long before I came into this world.'

But the problems' of Elm Haven are not its people but Elm Haven itself and the attitudes of a city that built it and sustains it.

Elm Haven is situated between Dixwell Avenue and the Olin Mathieson plant on Ashmun Avenue. A Hostess Cake factory shares part of a block with it. It is conveniently hidden from the gaze and life of the city. The nearest stores are a long walk away.
Physically, Elm Haven consists of two parts. There is the 'low rise'-- two-story dwelling between Dixwell and Ashmun streets built in 1940. The Elm Haven Extensionor 'high rise' was finished in 1955 and consists of six buildings eight to ten stories high. Everyone agrees that the worst problems are in the more congested high rise.

The buildings themselves are drab and falling apart. The halls smell of urine because there are no bathrooms on the ground floor. Little children usually cannot wait to get up to the ninth or tenth floor.

The buildings were not built to save steps for a tired mother. The elevator only stops every third floor, and the stairs are arranged so that it is sometimes necessary to go down one flight of stairs and up a second to get to another apartment on the same floor.
There are only three long lighted halls (on floors where the elevators stop). These floors have very low windows which are a danger if they are broken. A month ago a small girl fell from the seventh floor through a window which had been broken and not replaced. She is still on the critical list and tenants say the window has still not been fixed.

But the most crying need is for space. There is no place to play indoors or outdoors. And this is made even more important because 1002 of the 1502 residents are children.

The apartments are small and some are terribly overcrowded. The largest apartment in the high rise is six rooms with four bedrooms. There are families of nine and ten people occupying these rooms. Perhaps the most prevalent form of overcrowding is one parent and four kids in a two-bedroom apartment.

In one apartment there is a family of nine, a mother and eight children occupying four bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. Three boys, ages 10, 8, and 5, sleep in one 9'x6' bedroom with two boys in one single bed and one on an old chair. Two other boys, ages 4 and 6, sleep in a bunk bed in an 8' x8' bedroom. Three girls, ages 14, 13, 11, sleep in one double bed with no frame in a bedroom 8'x8'.

Outside the apartment it is not much better. Children must play either outdoors or in one of the three long halls in the building. The halls are too small and too dangerous. Outside there is a playground erected by the Housing Authority last summer: it is a paved surface strewn with broken glass.

Ever since the beginning of Mayor Lee's renewal plan, Elm Haven has had to give priority to people displaced by renewal. In addition, the Relocation Agency tries to send more unstable families there because Elm Haven has the best set of social services. In 1964, 'Concerted Services' was set up as a demonstration of social services concentrated in Elm Haven. Concerted Services consists of a Day Care Center, an Employment Unit, a Health Unit, Family Centered Services Project (a Welfare sub-office), the Housing Authority, and Winchester Community School.

Thus Elm Haven serves as a sieve. The stable, income earning, and smaller families find housing elsewhere. What the sieve catches are the fatherless, welfare families.

In the project as a whole, 49 percent of the families subsist totally on welfare and assistance payments. The number of families receiving assistance jumped 12 percent over last year. The average family income in the project is $3602.
Of the 548 families with children in the project, 312 (57%) have only a mother living with the family. The average number of children per family is 3.1 in the whole project and 3.6 in the high rise. The project is 85 per cent black.

Concerted Services took a survey of 90 families entering Elm Haven and 99 families leaving Elm Haven in the same time period. Of families leaving Elm Haven, 61% of their income came from employment and 15% from welfare. Of the entering families, 46% of their income came from employment and 49% from welfare. Of the families leaving,

63 were two-parent families and 30 were one-parent. Of the families entering, 25 were two-parent and 65 were one-parent.

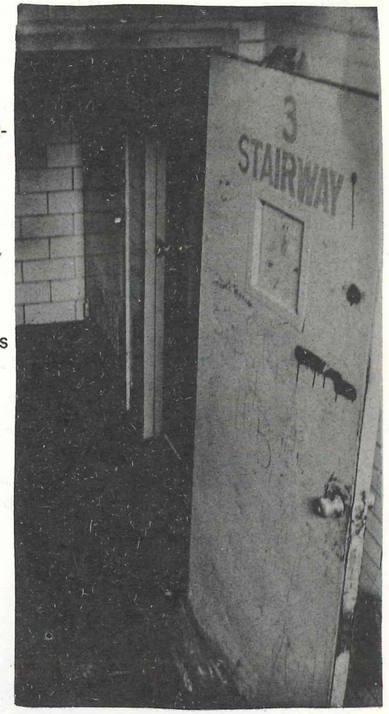
One of the biggest problems in Elm Haven is children. Many parents are trying to get out of Elm Haven because 'it is no place to bring up kids.' Despite attempts by the Housing Authority to set up constructive youth groups, children still have very little place to go and very little to do. Children play in the halls where they either make too much noise for some tenants or get into trouble because there are too many children in too little space.
Boys form gangs to prey on other children and threaten adults. They are frequently joined by youths from outside the project who invade Elm Haven because there are no police there. Elm Haven has one daytime security guard, a retired New Haven policeman.
As a result, parents and children are fearful, and many mothers, according to social workers, just lock themselves and their children in their apartments.
Several mothers recently made an attempt to call a meeting of all the mothers in one building. Only one mother came. One social worker said that the mothers were all frightened by the threat of retribution from the teenagers.

As one tenant said, 'People are up tight.' And the approaching summer does nothing to ease tensions. Many tenants expect a lot of violence this summer. 'Mr. Burke, he is going to have a hard time with these kids. They are resentful,' one tenant says.
Last summer the Housing Authority was hit by a Molotov Cocktail, and the offices of the family services have been broken into and vandalized several times.
Another whole side of the tenants' problems are their relations with the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority does not act like a regular landlord. It is more like a parole officer making sure the tenants do not break the rules.

Tenants must ask permission before having someone come to visit them overnight. Tenants say that the security guard while investigating damage will attempt to force confessions from suspect children.

Tenants also say that the Housing Authority calls in families who have had too many complaints against them.
This process coupled with the new eviction policy has brought a climate of divisiveness and distrust among tenants. Tenants claim it is too easy for other tenants to 'get them' by 'snitching' on them to the Housing Authority.

The lease the tenant signs says he must keep and maintain halls, stairs, and yards free and clean of ice; that he may not use or permit the use of premises



for illegal or immoral purposes; and that he must refrain from making any unnecessary noises or engaging in any other conduct which may tend to disturb or annoy the neighbors. Violations of these rules are grounds for eviction.

This clause is enforced by a series of fines for any damage done by a tenant's children. One tenant said that if her child was the only one who was recognized among a group of children causing damage, then she might be cnarged for all the damage.
A mother on welfare with a child who is hard to handle (a frequent occurrence in this grim environment) might

cont. p. 4

elm haven cont.

be assessed a staggering amount of fines. One woman on welfare was assessed a total of $105 in fines for damages done by her son. This included $55 for one playground light .

Some tenants say they are offended by the language of circulars sent around by the Housing Authority. The most recent complaints concern a notice about the mothers operating the elevators at lunch time and warning that mothers must keep their children from being fresh to the operators or they could be evicted.

But the biggest problem is always rent. Because they are economically insecure, tenants often cannot pay their rent on time. The consequences are economically severe. If the rent is not paid by the 16th of the month, the tenant receives the 'first notice to quit' which costs him a $5 fine. If he has not paid by the 23rd of the month, another notice is served and he is fined $28. When a tenant does pay his rent, he must pay all the fines and the rent at once. If the rent is paid during the next month, he must pay both months' rent at once. Partial payments can be arranged, but they are rare.
The tenants themselves are divided about what they see as Burke's attempts to removed nuisance tenants. In a survey taken by the Dixwell Human Rights Association, there appeared to be a substantial number of tenants who said they liked Burke's efforts to kick out unruly people. However, the number of people expressing approval of this campaign was significantly higher among elderly and childless families, and the number expressing disapproval was significantly higher among parents with children.

There is an atmosphere of distrust between some of the tenants and the Housing Authority. The Tenants at Elm Haven have no organized body to represent them. A Tenants Representation Council, in which each project in the city is represented, meets with the commissioners of the Housing Authority.

Elm Haven itself has no effective tenants organization. All parties concerned would like to see the tenants take on more initiative and responsibility. However, there is some question as to how much responsibility and initiative the Housing Authority will let the tenants take.

Recently a group of tenants got up a petition asking for security guards, elevator operators, meshed screen windows in the halls, covering for some of the porches, new screens, and a new playground utilizing open land on Canal Street. So far the Housing Authority has only given them elevator operators.

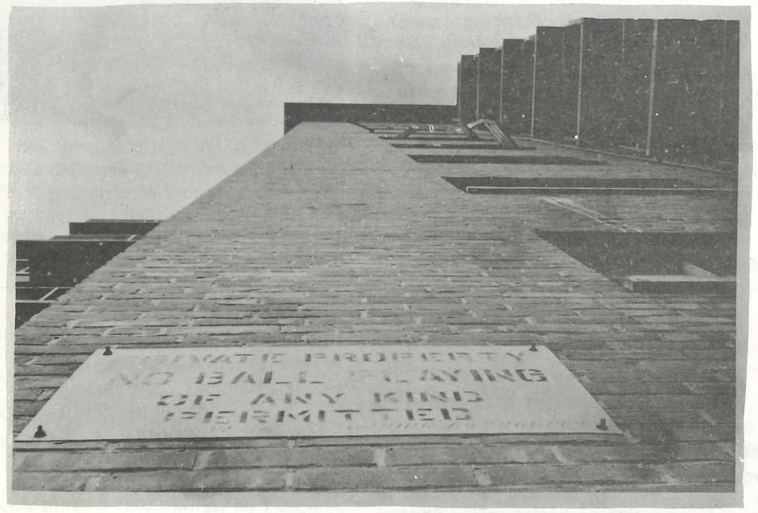
The city and the Housing Authority must come to grips with the problems they have created at Elm Haven. The first step would be to make Elm Haven liveable. The list of needed changes is endless: better painting and lighting, joining apartments to create more room, new and larger playgrounds, ground floor bathrooms, better elevator service-- these are among the most obvious and immediate needs.

The second step would be for the Housing Authority to cease being Elm Haven's parole officer and turn the administration of the building over to the tenants. This means not only giving up some of its power, but also supporting the tenants in their programs and needs for making Elm Haven a place where people can live with human dignity.

Attorney Rose and others have called for some sort of tenant body which could either arrange or actually conduct arbitration on complaints and evictions. However, the Housing Authority has shown no enthusiasm for any such formal transfer of power. And the Housing Authority will not be likely to give up any of their control as long as they wrongly believe that the problems of Elm Haven are a 'small minority' of tenants. The real problems of Elm Haven are the project itself and the city's attitude towards public housing.

The Housing Authority talks about unruly children when the real problem is no place to play. They talk about irresponsible tenants when Elm Haven is a cast-off, ill-designed building that no one could be responsible for. They talk about tenants who will not obey the rules when the real problem is rules that no other tenants anywhere have to obey.

But such change in attitude and increase in expenditure is not forthcoming. One reason for this is that the mistakes are self-perpetuating. Because the city sees the problem as the people and not the project, they assume there is little that can be done. As a results, no money is spent, attitudes harden, and the real problems continue. And caught in the middle, unable to break the cycle, is the tenant.



Photos by Richard Stoops

YALE EMPLOYEE STRIKE

by Judy Miller

At 8:10 a.m. May 2, approximately 1,000 Yale employees went on strike. The contract which the Federation of University Employees had been negotiating with Yale, was described in the Yale Daily News (May 2) as a 'complex document, unsuitable to snap judgments and simplifications.' A letter to the Yale faculty and staff from J.F.Embersits, Business Manager, and E.L.Stone, Director of Personnel, (May 3), claimed that 'the issues which separate the parties are technical and extremely varied.' The real issues were not, perhaps, as 'complex' or 'technical' as the University would like to make them seem.

This supposed complexity seemed, in fact, a smoke-screen to hide a very obvious division between those who were 'for' and those 'against'. People from AIM who picketed with the workers quickly learned who was where. On the side of the Union were the striking employees, some members of the newly formed Association of Clerical and Technical Workers, and a scattering of AIM, SDS, and Resistance supporters. In the opposite camp was the University management, the Campus Police, numerous 'white collar' employees, and a probable majority of Yale students.

The employees wanted, basically, higher wages, overtime pay (time and a half on Saturdays and double time on Sundays and holidays), and an eighteen month contract (giving the union more bargaining power). As one striker put it: 'We're looking for just a fair shake, that's all...We're not asking for nothing outrageous-- just a decent living.' The University was offering wage increases which at labor grade no. 1 amount to an increase of twenty-eight cents over three years; ten cents an hour pay differential for Saturday shifts and fifteen cents per hour additional wages on Sunday and holidays (if part of a regularly scheduled work week) ;and a three year contract. 'The University considers its proposal extremely beneficial to its Bargaining Unit employees and more than fair by any standards,' said the Embersits-Stone letter.

'They're talking about how nice they're being, but under the table, boy, they are turning the screws tighter and tighter,' exploded a young employee with a large family. 'And that premium pay they're talking about for Saturday and Sunday,' he continued, 'you know what that consists of? two dollars gross income a week, two more dollars a week, that's all!'

'Another thing that I heard them boasting about is they're saving $23,000 a day on wages,' another worker said.
The strikers knew what they were up against. 'Yale owns half the city,' people said, explaining the inadequate news coverage of the strike. 'Their arsenal is tremendous, compared to ours. They have the law on their side,for instance,' an employee told me, referring to the Campus Police who were at that moment protecting students scabs as they unloaded trucks under the angry surveilance of the strikers.
The one weapon the employees had, they knew, was the strike. They had hoped that when it happened on Yale's big 'College Weekend', the students (who have 'Yale over a barrel' through the dining room contract) would put strong pressure on the University to meet union demands. The students may have been, as the Yale Daily claimed, 'sympathetic but annoyed' when the strike began Thursday. On Friday and Saturday, as their big weekend got underway, they seemed increasingly annoyed and only occasionally sympathetic.

Friday afternoon there was an angry confrontation between workers and students when students crossed the picket line to unload picnic supplies. 'Workers are supposed to unload the trucks, operate the elevators, and do all the rest of that work,' a worker explained. 'These students are scabbing by unloading the trucks, using the scab-operated elevators, and preparing food'.
The students stood by, glowering at the pickets and complaining to the Campus Police.

'I think most of the students know a lot more about what the strike concerns and the problems being reached in negotiations,' one of the students told me. 'They seem to know a lot more than the strikers themselves who don't know what they voted for, or voted against, or what's being offered.' Nonetheless, this student and his friends didn't know they were crossing the line and scabbing.

The man who had talked about the management arsenal' was most discouraged by the student scabbing. 'Students working, like that one over there-- that doesn't help us at all. He's young and strong-- he can go 24 hours a day. He's only a kid.' Most strikers suggested that besides not scabbing, the students should not cross the lines at all. 'They should picket with us. They shouldn't go in to eat-- the food would spoil.'
In one bargaining session, union lawyer Moss Schenk cited the Columbia experience, implying that the faculty and students would be on the union side. Unlike Columbia-- or Paris-- there was little sign of student-worker coalition at Yale. 'The students are for it,' said a student lounging beside his weekend date and sports car, 'but they have to eat too.' Another student trying to organize student support for the strike, said that 'the reason most of the students are against the union is because this is college weekend and they don't want to disappoint their dates.'

The Yale Daily News editorial which suggested that 'on the face of it' Yale's offer appeared 'to be in accord with prevailing labor practices,' was sharply criticized by the employees. In a sidewalk debate between a young striker and a student from the Yale Daily staff, the student admitted 'these are things that are very new to us at the News... we got fifty-eight million different stories from people we talked to.'

The striking employees were well-informed and generally willing to explain their position to anyone who was

IM IN EXILE

he following excerpts are drawn
om two letters written to AIM
iends by Linda and Ron Prokopy
no are spending a year in Europe,
cluding three months in Poland.
ven though the letters were written
s letters -- not as news dispatches
- and certainly with no idea that
ney might be published, we felt our
eaders would enjoy them as much
s we have; especially after realizing
hat the concluding sentences were
written before the Paris and Rome
uprisings.

The Editors.

...We spent about five days in Athens and were very fortunate to be there during Easter week -- we saw the Good Friday evening procession. Despite the great personal warmth and openness of the Greeks, they are very scared and tightlipped about some things of a political nature. I visited some scientists in Athens and became good friends with them, but at the mention of the word "government" they turned pale and were very cool after that. We were of course aware of the problems in Greece, but didn't appreciate why everyone was so scared until we saw this Good Friday procession. It began about 9 p.m. We thought it would consist of hundreds of bishops and clergy -- the entire route was lined with townspeople holding lighted candles. which seemed a most fitting environment for this religious event. But we were absolutely shocked at what happened as the parade began. It started off with about 500 soldiers in front, all with their guns ready, then soldiers along both sides -- then came the vice-premier and all the governing colonels and generals in their uniforms -- finally came about 50-75 bishops and clergy -- then many more military -- some religious parade! So we saw why things are so tense in Athens despite the outer warmth of the people. The air was absolutely electric as those military rulers marched by in the candlelight....

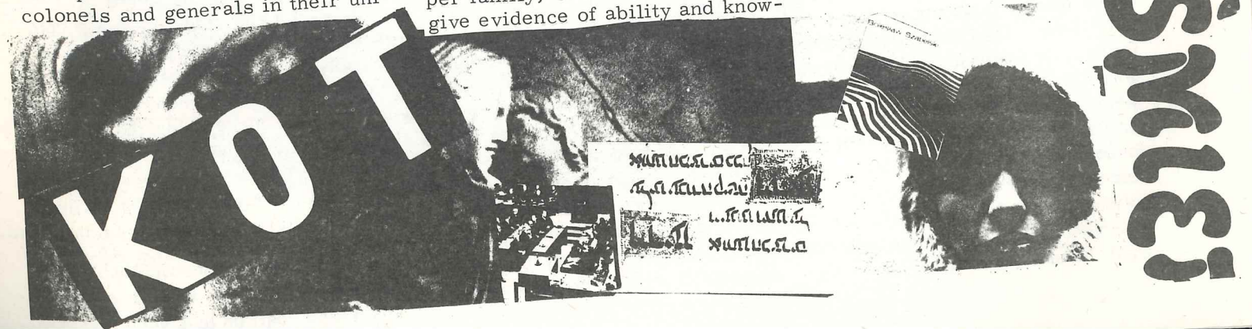
We arrived in Poland as the latest political crisis and shake-up was just blowing over. We only suffered under it in the delay of our visas and living here see no evidence of it. The people we've talked with say little about it -- not because they're afraid (they're very frank and honest in discussion) but because they don't understand what it was all about -- neither do we. Except that, on the most superficial level, it apparently was a power play to remove Gomulka by siphoning off the lower officials, leaving him isolated (a rock on a melting ice pinnacle). The Jews and students were apparently tools used to accomplish this dirty little task (handy tools: the Jews always are, and the students by coincidence staged their own protests for their own purposes at an unfortunate moment, unbeknownst to them). If it is a good or justifiable change, or even to what extent it succeeded, we have absolutely no idea.
It's very hard for me to even begin to assess this government. For one thing it takes a long time to understand what it really is in relation to the lives of the people, in relation to Poland's past, or in relation to what might be possible here. Some things we've seen have been (or appear to be) very good: e.g., agricultural controls; land usage -- land can be privately owned but no less than 8 hectars (24 acres)nor more than 50 hectars (125 acres) per family, and only those who can give evidence of ability and knowledge to use the land productively can now purchase land. This should insure productivity (along with things like a new law that requires the use of fertilizer) and should also prohibit large monopolies or the too small farm that is very inefficient. The farmers here operate in co-operatives for their machinery but are left pretty much to themselves in questions of what to grow, how much to grow and to whom they will sell (the "capitalist" truck farmers near Warsaw who sell vegetables at very good prices are now under attack -- and perhaps should be). The greatest drawback we see here so far is an incredible bureaucracy -- really incredible. And also a very tight censorship of mail and printed matter. We're beginning to think freedom of press and speech is one of the most precious human rights -- and it clearly does not exist here....

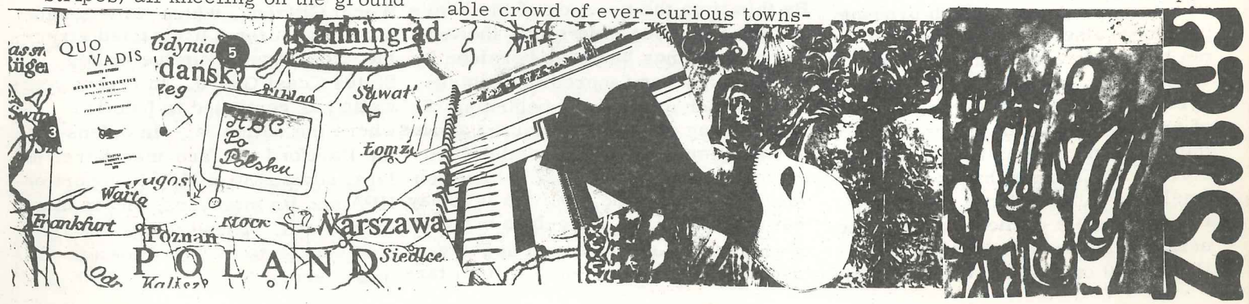
We have so much to learn here though before we can analyze or judge this place. The history of Poland is very important to that analysis, as are its natural resources, its peasant farmer culture, its own character and pride, and its goals and ideals. We have learned that they have come a long, long way from pre-war poverty and nearly total destruction during the war (lost 38% of the national wealth, as compared to Britain's 0.8%). Another disturbing thing I've learned has to do with myself and my American character -- I find I'm really not capable of judging the country on any basis other than materialism. That's partly because most of my experience here has to do with marketing, etc. (it's a pitiful experience because material goods are scarce, expensive and poor in both variety and quality), and it's also due to my American experience -- sad to realize that you're a materialist and it necessitates some rethinking. I want very much to learn what life means to people here in a dirty, ugly, drab town like Skierniewice where a pair of ugly, ugly sandals costs two days pay; where the only chicken you can buy is at Thursday market -- complete with head, feathers, legs and innards; where there is no laundry (I now know how to do all the laundry by hand in a huge bathtub with no drain connections); no restaurant, no bar and -- sad, sad -- no art, music, theater and no beauty. It drives me wild, but I want to know what it means to them. (An interesting thing happened in Sicily where a fisherman talking about his town was lamenting that there was no art or music -- a simple fisherman.) They have literally nothing to do here but work or perhaps tend their garden (if they have one). When I go to Warsaw I come alive again -- even to see people moving about stores that aren't dark dungeons and art museums that are poor but at least exist.

But I can't write this letter without telling you about Thursday market in Skierniewice -- that's the day I come alive here. If you like State Street (or its possibility) you'd dance in glee all around the Skierniewice market -- it's the best I've seen in Europe for genuine color and just genuineness. It covers several square blocks (a good bit of which is taken up with horses and carts -- the most common mode of transport here -- no air pollution but watch where you step!). The first thing you come upon is a scene of farm women (in beautiful hand woven wool capes in oranges and reds -- stripes) all kneeling on the ground on spread blankets, surrounded by cloth bags, tops rolled down, filled with every kind of seed imaginable. Each bag has a tiny wooden scoop (old and cracked) with which they dole out seed, pouring it into cones made of newspaper. They sell it for spring planting. Next you see about a dozen meat stalls (11 of pork -- the national staple plus potatoes and beets; and one of beef). The beef table is the most interesting and the most saddening: all cuts of beef are the same price, precisely because there are no cuts. Poles are very unaccustomed to beef and it shows. A whole quarter beef is thrown across the table and a man comes with a huge ax and whoom! chops it into pieces. You buy a kilogram of beef and can get anything from kidneys to sirloin all in one. In fact they use beef almost only for soups and stocks. An amazing sight is to see a man come up and ask for about 10 kilograms. The "butcher" gathers up several hunks, weighs it out and then stuffs it, unwrapped, into the guy's briefcase! A new look on Madison Avenue! Well, the egg and chicken ladies are next -- the first time I went I couldn't find eggs but later, after a search, I discovered that somewhere in a huddle of old women and baskets, off to the side, there were eggs and chickens. I bravely sauntered into the huddle and was immediately latched onto by one old woman with a basket full of eggs. I peered in, saw about 15 eggs, pointed to them and said, "szesc" (six). She got all excited, sputtering Polish, which I told her I couldn't speak. I finally figured out that she wanted me to take all 15 -- then the bargaining began. Both of us by this time squatted on the ground with a sizeable crowd of ever-curious townspeople gathered around: 15 for so much -- no, six -- then I had only a big bill -- no, she couldn't change it -- okay, 4 for all the change I had -- all right, all right, she could change the bill. Then followed a lengthy discussion to determine where I was from -- once America was established she turned to the crowd knowingly, shaking her head, and before I could leave was given a strict lecture by all about how to hang on to my pocketbook and handle my money. It was sad in a way because again my Americanism had come through in my unconsciously loose handling of money before these people who weigh every zloty before spending it and watch their money carefully. Well, that gives you an idea of market -- it goes on and on to include sheep's wool, vegetables, live animals, dead chickens that look alive to me, used shoes, cheap housedresses, a hat table, handmade furniture and baskets crafted by hand from birch branches. All around the market sit little old ladies selling herbs, flowers and leaves they've gathered in the country, and come to market with a stool to sit on clutching their baskets in gnarled hands. ...

...I remember conversations we had concerning Europe's future; its increasing movement towards the kinds of values and policies of which we are most critical in America. (we have gotten the definite feeling along the way that the Communists in Italy, France, etc. are as bad as the liberals in the States -- nothing will come from them, I don't think.) But protest against these things is not silent here -- and important political protest is strong

cont. p. 10





AIM IN EXILE

The following excerpts are drawn from two letters written to AIM friends by Linda and Ron Prokopy who are spending a year in Europe, including three months in Poland. Even though the letters were written as letters -- not as news dispatches -- and certainly with no idea that they might be published, we felt our readers would enjoy them as much as we have; especially after realizing that the concluding sentences were written before the Paris and Rome uprisings.

The Editors.

...We spent about five days in Athens and were very fortunate to be there during Easter week -- we saw the Good Friday evening procession. Despite the great personal warmth and openness of the Greeks, they are very scared and tightlipped about some things of a political nature. I visited some scientists in Athens and became good friends with them, but at the mention of the word "government" they turned pale and were very cool after that. We were of course aware of the problems in Greece, but didn't appreciate why everyone was so scared until we saw this Good Friday procession. It began about 9 p.m. We thought it would consist of hundreds of bishops and clergy -- the entire route was lined with townspeople holding lighted candles. which seemed a most fitting environment for this religious event. But we were absolutely shocked at what happened as the parade began. It started off with about 500 soldiers in front, all with their guns ready, then soldiers along both sides -- then came the vice-premier and all the governing colonels and generals in their uniforms -- finally came about 50-75 bishops and clergy -- then many more military -- some religious parade! So we saw why things are so tense in Athens despite the outer warmth of the people. The air was absolutely electric as those military rulers marched by in the candlelight....

We arrived in Poland as the latest political crisis and shake-up was just blowing over. We only suffered under it in the delay of our visas and living here see no evidence of it. The people we've talked with say little about it -- not because they're afraid (they're very frank and honest in discussion) but because they don't understand what it was all about -- neither do we. Except that, on the most superficial level, it apparently was a power play to remove Gomulka by siphoning off the lower officials, leaving him isolated (a rock on a melting ice pinnacle). The Jews and students were apparently tools used to accomplish this dirty little task (handy tools: the Jews always are, and the students by coincidence staged their own protests for their own purposes at an unfortunate moment, unbeknownst to them). If it is a good or justifiable change, or even to what extent it succeeded, we have absolutely no idea.

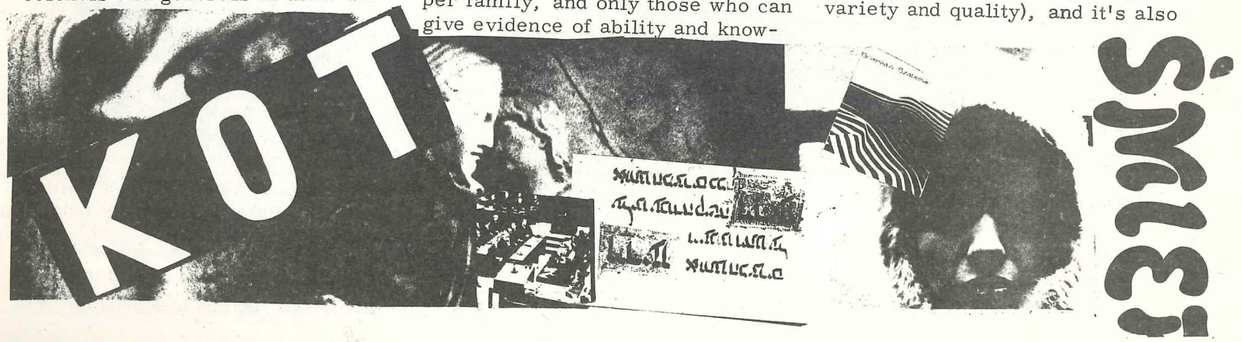
It's very hard for me to even begin to assess this government. For one thing it takes a long time to understand what it really is in relation to the lives of the people, in relation to Poland's past, or in relation to what might be possible here. Some things we've seen have been (or appear to be) very good: e.g., agricultural controls; land usage -- land can be privately owned but no less than 8 hectars (24 acres)nor more than 50 hectars (125 acres) per family, and only those who can give evidence of ability and knowledge to use the land productively can now purchase land. This should insure productivity (along with things like a new law that requires the use of fertilizer) and should also prohibit large monopolies or the too small farm that is very inefficient. The farmers here operate in co-operatives for their machinery but are left pretty much to themselves in questions of what to grow, how much to grow and to whom they will sell (the "capitalist" truck farmers near Warsaw who sell vegetables at very good prices are now under attack -- and perhaps should be). The greatest drawback we see here so far is an incredible bureaucracy -- really incredible. And also a very tight censorship of mail and printed matter. We're beginning to think freedom of press and speech is one of the most precious human rights -- and it clearly does not exist here....

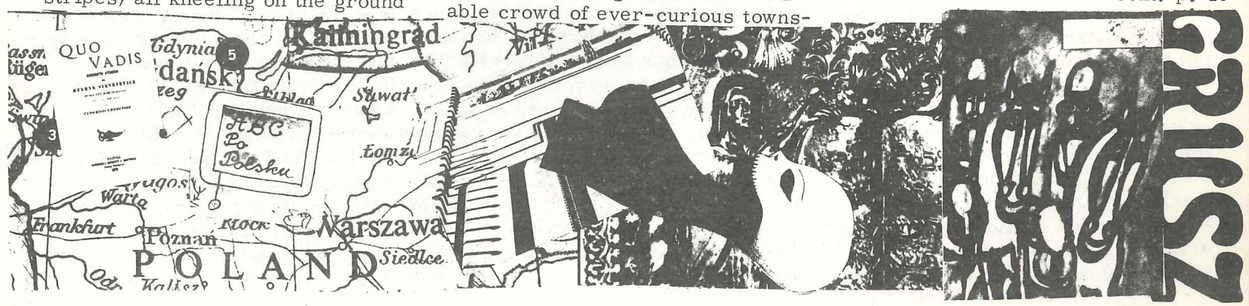
We have so much to learn here though before we can analyze or judge this place. The history of Poland is very important to that analysis, as are its natural resources, its peasant farmer culture, its own character and pride, and its goals and ideals. We have learned that they have come a long, long way from pre-war poverty and nearly total destruction during the war (lost 38% of the national wealth, as compared to Britain's 0.8%). Another disturbing thing I've learned has to do with myself and my American character -- I find I'm really not capable of judging the country on any basis other than materialism. That's partly because most of my experience here has to do with marketing, etc. (it's a pitiful experience because material goods are scarce, expensive and poor in both variety and quality), and it's also due to my American experience -- sad to realize that you're a materialist and it necessitates some rethinking. I want very much to learn what life means to people here in a dirty, ugly, drab town like Skierniewice where a pair of ugly, ugly sandals costs two days pay; where the only chicken you can buy is at Thursday market -- complete with head, feathers, legs and innards; where there is no laundry (I now know how to do all the laundry by hand in a huge bathtub with no drain connections); no restaurant, no bar and -- sad, sad -- no art, music, theater and no beauty. It drives me wild, but I want to know what it means to them. (An interesting thing happened in Sicily where a fisherman talking about his town was lamenting that there was no art or music -- a simple fisherman.) They have literally nothing to do here but work or perhaps tend their garden (if they have one). When I go to Warsaw I come alive again -- even to see people moving about stores that aren't dark dungeons and art museums that are poor but at least exist.

But I can't write this letter without telling you about Thursday market in Skierniewice -- that's the day I come alive here. If you like State Street (or its possibility) you'd dance in glee all around the Skierniewice market -- it's the best I've seen in Europe for genuine color and just genuineness. It covers several square blocks (a good bit of which is taken up with horses and carts -- the most common mode of transport here -- no air pollution but watch where you step!). The first thing you come upon is a scene of farm women (in beautiful hand woven wool capes in oranges and reds -- stripes) all kneeling on the ground on spread blankets, surrounded by cloth bags, tops rolled down, filled with every kind of seed imaginable. Each bag has a tiny wooden scoop (old and cracked) with which they dole out seed, pouring it into cones made of newspaper. They sell it for spring planting. Next you see about a dozen meat stalls (11 of pork -- the national staple plus potatoes and beets; and one of beef). The beef table is the most interesting and the most saddening: all cuts of beef are the same price, precisely because there are no cuts. Poles are very unaccustomed to beef and it shows. A whole quarter beef is thrown across the table and a man comes with a huge ax and whoom! chops it into pieces. You buy a kilogram of beef and can get anything from kidneys to sirloin all in one. In fact they use beef almost only for soups and stocks. An amazing sight is to see a man come up and ask for about 10 kilograms. The "butcher" gathers up several hunks, weighs it out and then stuffs it, unwrapped, into the guy's briefcase! A new look on Madison Avenue! Well, the egg and chicken ladies are next -- the first time I went I couldn't find eggs but later, after a search, I discovered that somewhere in a huddle of old women and baskets, off to the side, there were eggs and chickens. I bravely sauntered into the huddle and was immediately latched onto by one old woman with a basket full of eggs. I peered in, saw about 15 eggs, pointed to them and said, "szesc" (six). She got all excited, sputtering Polish, which I told her I couldn't speak. I finally figured out that she wanted me to take all 15 -- then the bargaining began. Both of us by this time squatted on the ground with a sizeable crowd of ever-curious townspeople gathered around: 15 for so much -- no, six -- then I had only a big bill -- no, she couldn't change it -- okay, 4 for all the change I had -- all right, all right, she could change the bill. Then followed a lengthy discussion to determine where I was from -- once America was established she turned to the crowd knowingly, shaking her head, and before I could leave was given a strict lecture by all about how to hang on to my pocketbook and handle my money. It was sad in a way because again my Americanism had come through in my unconsciously loose handling of money before these people who weigh every zloty before spending it and watch their money carefully. Well, that gives you an idea of market -- it goes on and on to include sheep's wool, vegetables, live animals, dead chickens that look alive to me, used shoes, cheap housedresses, a hat table, handmade furniture and baskets crafted by hand from birch branches. All around the market sit little old ladies selling herbs, flowers and leaves they've gathered in the country, and come to market with a stool to sit on clutching their baskets in gnarled hands. ...

...I remember conversations we had concerning Europe's future; its increasing movement towards the kinds of values and policies of which we are most critical in America. (we have gotten the definite feeling along the way that the Communists in Italy, France, etc. are as bad as the liberals in the States -- nothing will come from them, I don't think.) But protest against these things is not silent here -- and important political protest is strong

cont. p. 10





strike cont.

interested. They knew that while Yale might be starting to set a competitive wage for the upper labor grade levels, the unskilled workers were not even making a living wage. Despite lack of student and 'white collar' staff support (not only were management and students scabbing, but secretaries were serving in dining halls, etc.), many employees seemed to be optimistic about the University meeting their demands. Some, with President Brewster's recent talk of 'obligation' to the New Haven community in mind, may have expected Yale to take a leadership role in improving the position of blue collar workers. But there must have been many employees who shared the pessimism of an older Italian worker from Fair Haven who talked to me about the strike. 'There's an old Italian saying,' he told me, 'I guess it could be an old American saying too--'The big fish eat the little fish'.'

exile cont.

and becoming stronger. I guess we'd say that we don't see Europe as a dying country or countries, but rather that student activists here -- like Rudi Dutschke in Germany -- are going to be an important force in bringing about a lot of change. Most of the action is in the U.S. now, but I think that in a very few years the same sort of action will be going on in much of western Europe -- and much of it will be against all the established forces and parties including the Communists. (Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland, Yugoslavia, etc.) is a different story, but more about this in future letters....

AIM

Editorial Staff
Rich Beth
Rose Brown
Lis Henderson
Rich Hexter
Peter Rose
The bulletin of the American Independent Movement will be published every two or three weeks.
Letters to the editor are invited.
Subscriptions to the AIM newsletter cost $2 a year, $5 for a sponsoring subscription.
Fill out your checks to AIM Newsletter and send to
AIM
241 Orange Street
New Haven, Conn. 06510.
For information write or call 777-0123.

GENERAL MEETINGS

MONDAY, JUNE 24 AT 8PM
AIM OFFICE, 241 ORANGE STREET

REPORT FROM NORTH VIETNAM
Dave Tobis

MONDAY, JULY 8 AT 8PM
AIM OFFICE, 241 ORANGE STREET

Discussion:
'68 ELECTIONS - AIM CANDIDATE?

American Independent Movement
241 Orange Street
New Haven, Conn. 06510

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID 3.6¢
New Haven, Conn.
Permit No. 89